Shojo Beat Manga

BLANK SLATE

2

Story & Art by

Aya Kanno

scan by why

THAT'S WHAT I WANT TO KNOW.
...

Shojo Beat

BLANK SLATE

Vol. 2

Story & Art by Aya Kanno

BLANK SLATE

Chapter Five

scan by why

NO GOOD.

NO RESTRICTIONS.

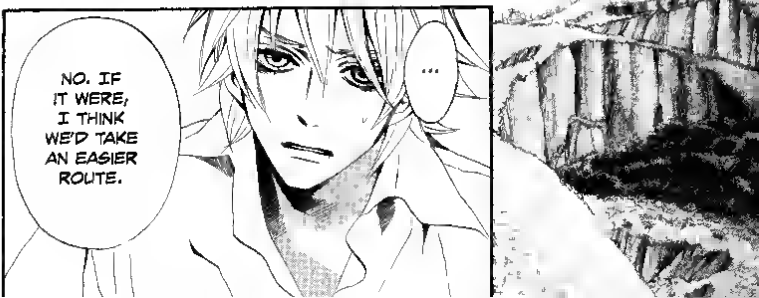
NO MEMORIES.

FIGHT...

...IN ORDER TO DESTROY.

WHAT?
YOU KNOW WHERE WE'RE GOING, RIGHT?

YOU THINK THIS IS JUST A JOYRIDE?


NO. IF IT WERE, I THINK WE'D TAKE AN EASIER ROUTE.
...

HURRY UP.
WE NEED TO DISAPPEAR BEFORE THEY FIND THE TRUCK WE DITCHED.
IF WE'D DROPPED IT IN THE GORGE,
...WE'D HAVE A LITTLE MORE TIME, BUT...
...

DO AWAY WITH IT, SOLDIERS AND ALL?!
WE DON'T HAVE TO DESTROY EVERY-THING, YOU KNOW!
HUMAN LIVES... YOU DON'T CARE ABOUT ANYONE AT ALL.
I WILL NEVER...
...UNDER-STAND...
...THE WAY YOU THINK...

scan by why

WHERE THE HELL ARE WE?
...

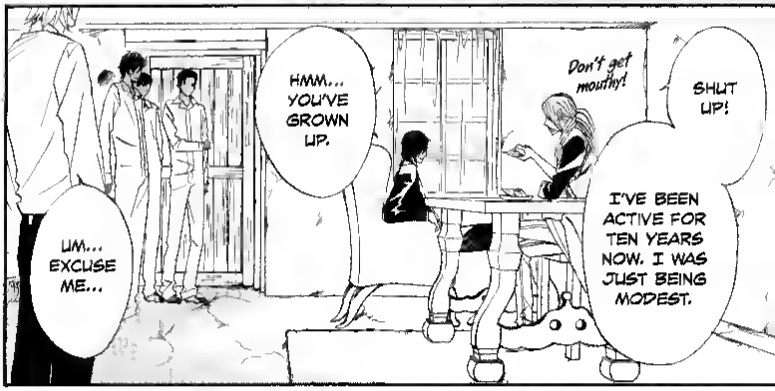
THIS IS MY HOME.
...CONNECTED TO YOUR PAST?
HOW IS THIS...

WOOSH
I HAVEN'T BEEN BACK FOR ALMOST TEN YEARS.
HOME ...?!
!
ZE...

I THOUGHT YOU WERE A GALAYAN SOLDIER...
WHAT?
...WEARING THOSE RIDICULOUS CLOTHES.

scan by why

...
YOU WERE ALREADY OLD TEN YEARS AGO.
HOW COME I'M THE ONLY ONE GETTING OLD AROUND HERE?
DID YOU FORGET TO AGE IN THE LAST TEN YEARS?
YOU'RE STILL SO PRETTY. F***IN' IRRITATING!


UM... EXCUSE ME...
HMM... YOU'VE GROWN UP.
Don't get mouthy!
SHUT UP!
I'VE BEEN ACTIVE FOR TEN YEARS NOW. I WAS JUST BEING MODEST.

WHAT BLEW YOU INTO TOWN?
THAT'S MY LINE.
...WHERE SHOULD I BEGIN?
...THERE ARE SO MANY THINGS I WANT TO ASK...

1

Hello! I'm glad to see you here again! This is Volume 2!

This time I'm thinking about revealing some spoilers and doing a little behind-the scenes talk here.

So for those of you who don't like that sort of thing, and those of you reading *Blank Slate* for the first time in the graphic novels, read with caution.

So then...see you in the next sidebar.

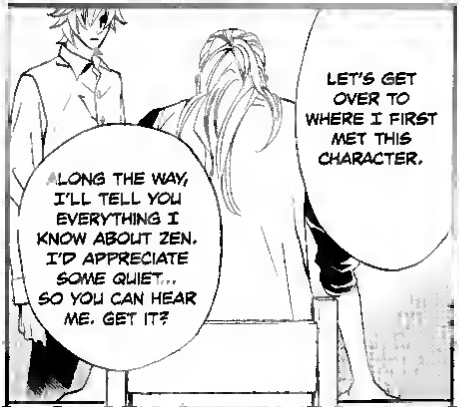
...
IF YOU'VE GOT BUSINESS HERE, SPIT IT OUT.
I SEE...
YOU'RE IN TROUBLE, RIGHT?
BUT...
IT DIDN'T SEEM IMPORTANT BACK THEN.
...YOU NEVER ASKED ABOUT YOUR PAST. YOU NEVER SEEMED TO CARE.
...THE FEW YEARS YOU LIVED HERE AFTER WE MET TEN YEARS AGO...

THE ONLY HELP I CAN OFFER IS A LITTLE...
...INFORMATION, LIKE A HINT. THAT OKAY WITH YOU?

...THAT MEANS THAT YOU MET AFTER ZEN LOST HIS MEMORY, RIGHT?
IF YOU MET TEN YEARS AGO...
WAIT.

RIGHT. I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING.
SO REGARDING HIS LOST PAST, YOU ALSO...

IT'S A LONG STORY..
YOU TWO ARE SIBLINGS ...?
AND YET...


LONG THE WAY, I'LL TELL YOU EVERYTHING I KNOW ABOUT ZEN. I'D APPRECIATE SOME QUIET... SO YOU CAN HEAR ME. GET IT?
LET'S GET OVER TO WHERE I FIRST MET THIS CHARACTER.

'SIDES, THERE'S NO ONE ELSE TO ASK.
YEAH.

WE MET TEN YEARS AGO.
BUT... IT'S NOT LIKE WE ACTUALLY MET.
HE WAS DYING AT THE BOTTOM OF A CLIFF...
...AND WE PICKED HIM UP.
OKAY?

WE WENT AROUND PLUNDERING CORPSES AND STRAY SOLDIERS...
GALAY WAS INVADING AMATA. IT WAS RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE WAR.
...IN THE MOUNTAINS OF AMATA.
TEN YEARS AGO, I WAS THE LEADER OF THE ZENDO A BAND OF THIEVES BASICALLY...
YEAH... HE DOESN'T LOOK LIKE A GALAYAN OR AMATAN.
IT'S THE FIRST TIME I'VE SEEN THIS INSIGNIA, BUT...
YEAH... SURE LOOKS THAT WAY.
IS HE A SOLDIER?
IT WASN'T UNUSUAL TO SEE A BLOODY CORPSE COMPLETELY SHOT UP WITH BULLETS, BUT...
CAN YOU TALK? WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
YOU...
WAIT! ..HE'S STILL BREATHING.
HURRY AND TAKE ANYTHING VALUABLE..
IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT HE IS.
!

...
ZE...
...
scan by ubg
WHY, YOU ASK? WELL, THAT'S...
...BUT WE TOOK HIM BACK TO OUR HIDEOUT.
USUALLY WE WOULD HAVE LEFT HIM JUST LIKE THAT. WITHOUT ANOTHER THOUGHT...
...
...
...BECAUSE HE WAS... SIMPLY PERFECT.

BY ZEN DO THEY MEAN THAT MAN?
WHAT A RUCKUS!
THEN I'M GONNA GIVE HIM A SPONGE BATH! ♡
LET'S DRAW LOTS FOR THAT!
I'LL GET WATER FOR ZEN TO DRINK!
HOWEVER...
Zen woke up!
He's conscious!
...WE CALL HIM ZEN, FOR ZENDO.
HMPH.
YEAH! WE DON'T KNOW WHAT COMES AFTER ZE, SO FOR NOW...
WE'LL KNOW EVERYTHING WHEN HE WAKES UP.
...IT DOESN'T MATTER.
WELL...
Let's toss a coin!
I told you I get to.
EEE!
...

I CAN'T REMEMBER...
...
...ANY-THING.
SO...
...WHEN YOU STARTED TO SAY YOUR NAME TO ME HAD YOU ALREADY LOST YOUR MEMORY?
...
WHEN THE SLEEPING PRINCE AWOKE, HE HAD AMNESIA.

HE WAS SO BADLY INJURED IT'S A MIRACLE HE WAS STILL ALIVE.
OUR TREATMENT WAS MINIMAL, IN JUST A FEW DAYS...
THIS WASN'T A MIRACLE. RATHER, THIS MAN WAS.
...ABNORMAL.
SHOW ME YOUR WRIST.
HM?
HEY... WHAT'S...
A BRUISE?
NO... A TATTOO?
WHAT IS THIS MARK?
BUT...
...I GUESS IT'S NO GOOD ASKING YOU, IS IT?
...

...IT WASN'T THE FIRST TIME I HAD MET SOMEONE LIKE THAT.

BUT...

...ZEN WAS INCREDIBLY DETACHED.

FROM PEOPLE AND THINGS... EVEN FROM HIMSELF.

WHETHER IT WAS FROM THE SHOCK OF HIS INJURY OR HE WAS ALWAYS LIKE THAT...

FOR YEARS I LED THESE WOMEN WHO HAD NO ASSOCIATION TO RACE OR NATIONALITY... THEY HAD LOST THEIR IDENTITY...

ALL THE WOMEN IN ZENDO HAD A TRAUMATIC PAST AND WERE IN SOME WAY SCARRED OR INCOMPLETE.

...
IT SEEMS YOU'VE ALSO LOST YOUR IDENTITY.
PROBABLY ALSO DUE TO SOME KIND OF...
HOW AWFUL!
UNTIL NOW...
...WE HAVE ALWAYS...
...HAD A POLICY OF NOT ALLOWING MEN TO JOIN.
CREAK
BUT I GUESS..
Because when men get involved, all kinds of problems follow.
...WE SISTERS WERE NEVER REALLY CUT OUT FOR RULES.
IF YOU STAY HERE, I DON'T THINK ANYONE WILL COMPLAIN.
On the contrary, they'll probably be happy.
Do
HOWEVER ...
COMPASSION?
...WE'LL HAVE YOU HELP US WITH OUR WORK.
OH, AND...

...THERE'S ONE RULE YOU HAVE TO OBEY WHILE YOU'RE HERE.
ALL RIGHT?
...ZEN...
SERIOUSLY...
IF YOU'VE GOT AN OUNCE OF COMPASSION AT ALL, YOU DON'T BELONG HERE.
A BEAUTIFUL MAN WITH A PAST...
THE SISTERS WON'T BE ABLE TO LEAVE HIM ALONE FOR LONG...
CALL ME BIG SIS.
CALL ME MA'AM AND I'LL KILL YOUR ASS.

scan by why

MISS RIAN...
DID YOU HEAR?
MAJOR KYRIE IS QUITTING THE ARMY..
NO!
WELL, IT'S ONLY A RUMOR, BUT...
HE'S ADMITTED TO MAKING MISTAKES, LETTING ZEN GET AWAY..
...AND HE TURNED IN HIS LETTER OF RESIGNATION.
WHAT? ...MAJOR KYRIE...
Tok tok
WHAT ABOUT YOUR ENGAGEMENT?
It is just a rumor, though!
BUT THE REALLY TERRIBLE THING IS ZEN.
HE HAS NO REGARD FOR HUMAN LIFE.
HE SIMPLY MUST BE CAUGHT AND KILLED IMMEDIATELY!
Doncha think, Miss Rian?
...

IF YOU WANT TO BE FREE...
...DESTROY YOUR WORLD YOURSELF.
ZEN
...
I WONDER WHEN...
...I WILL BE ABLE TO SEE YOU...
DID YOU CALL ME...
...COLONEL?
WHAT IS THIS?

...MAJOR DAKAN KYRIE?
YOU'RE RESIGNING ...

...AND LOSING A SUPERB SOLDIER LIKE YOU WOULD BE REGRETTABLE.
ACTUALLY I DON'T MIND THAT YOU ARE TOO SERIOUS AND RIDICULOUSLY HONEST...
I HAVE NO RIGHT TO CONTINUE ON AS A SOLDIER.
I RUBBED MUD IN THE FACES OF EVERYONE IN THE ARMY, STARTING WITH THE GENERAL.
SO MANY FAIL-URES ...

...IF YOU LEAVE THE WAR NOW, IN THE MIDST OF ONGOING DEFEATS, EVERYONE WILL THINK YOU'RE JUST GIVING UP.
I CAN'T STOP YOU FROM QUITTING THE ARMY ...
... BUT ...
...

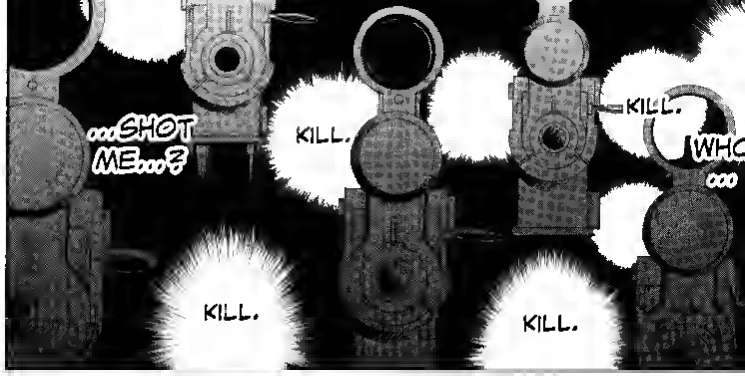
IF THE ARMY WON'T GIVE YOU ANOTHER CHANCE...
...I'M NOT GOING TO BE SO NAIVE...
...AS TO THINK FOR EVEN A MOMENT THAT I'D BE GIVEN A SECOND CHANCE.
IT'S NOT THAT I'M RUNNING AWAY.
MORE THAN ANYTHING, I'D LIKE TO CATCH ZEN WITH MY OWN HANDS, BUT...
...I WILL...
...KYRIE.
FROM NOW ON I WILL LOOK AFTER YOU...
...AS WELL AS THIS RESIGNATION.
GO AFTER ZEN.

WE'VE ARRIVED.
IT'S HERE.
HERE...
...IS WHERE I PICKED YOU UP.. ZEN.
HERE ...

...
...I LOST MY MEMORY.
I, UH... DON'T THINK WE'LL FIND ANY CLUES HERE, THOUGH.
I MEAN, IT WAS TEN YEARS AGO.
ZEN?
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
WHERE ARE YOU...?

UM...
THE TOP OF THE CLIFF?
I FELL FROM HERE.
GASP.
SOMETIMES...
...I GET A FLASHBACK. .
...A FRAGMENT OF MEMORY THAT SURFACES FROM SOMEWHERE INSIDE ME.

...AND THEN I FALL.
IT WAS LIKE THAT WHEN I LOST CONSCIOUSNESS THE OTHER DAY.
KILL!
A VOICE...
DESTROY!
AN IMAGE OF KILLING... SOMETHING.
I'M SHOT THROUGH...
FALLING ...
WHO?
KILL.
SHOT THROUGH ...
scan by why


...SHOT ME...?
KILL.
KILL.
WHO
...
KILL.
KILL.

SHOOT!
ZEN!

...
ARE...
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
...
YOU SHOULD STILL BE TAKING IT EASY.
A BLACK FLAME...
THE MAN WHO SHOT ME... HIS SOLDIERING UNIT...
HUNH?

THAT INSIGNIA DOESN'T EXIST ANYWHERE I'VE SEEN.
THAT INSIGNIA WAS ON...
...BLACK FATIGUES.
...
SO MAYBE IT'S NOT GALAYAN OR AMATAN.
A BLACK FLAME...
I'VE SEEN IT...
WHERE?
...ON A SOLDIER IN THE SAME UNIFORM...
...ONLY ONCE BEFORE...

YOU ...
... ZEN.
THEN...
I WAS SHOT BY ONE OF MY OWN MEN?
NO...
...WHEN I FOUND YOU, YOU WERE WEARING IT.
TEN YEARS AGO...
CITIZEN'S RESISTANCE FORCE... OR MERCE-NARIES-
A SECRET FORCE?
BUT WHAT UNIT COULD IT POSSIBLY BE?
IF YOU PIECE EVERYTHING TOGETHER .. THAT'S PROBABLY ABOUT RIGHT.

NO...
ZEN'S SOMETHING MORE...
HE'S BEEN HIGHLY CONDITIONED AND PERFECTLY TRAINED WITHIN A TOP-RANK ORGANIZATION...
THAT'S WHAT I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT...
WHAT YOU THINK, ZEN?
BUT OUT HERE, LAW AND MORALITY DON'T MEAN SQUAT.
WE STEAL TO LIVE.
EVERYONE ELSE IS MERELY OPPORTUNITY.
WE AREN'T CONTROLLED BY ANYONE.

NO HESITATION, ALL RIGHT?
IF YOU DON'T KILL, YOU WILL BE-

IN ONE INSTANT HE KILLED THREE SOLDIERS...
HIS EXPRESSION NEVER CHANGED.
FLUMP
BIG SIS...
FWUMP
HE ALONE CAN DO AN AMOUNT OF WORK EQUAL TO ALL OF US.
HIS MENTAL AND PHYSICAL ABILITIES ARE SUPER-HUMAN.
THERE ISN'T ANYTHING FOR US TO TEACH HIM AT ALL!
ZEN...
...IS VALUABLE.

scan by ubig

HE'S A FIRST-RATE ASSASSIN.

YOU REALLY DO LOOK LIKE A GALAYAN SOLDIER FROM AFAR.
EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE A FRIEND, SHE WELCOMED YOU WITH A POINTED GUN.
YOU ALSO LOOK LIKE A GALAYAN SOLDIER.
WHEN SHE TOLD US HOW YOU TWO FIRST MET, I FELT LIKE I GOT A GLIMPSE OF
...
WE NEED TO CHANGE OUR CLOTHES SOON.

I FEEL ...
.. A LITTLE ..
...SAFER.
YOU'RE... NOT A MONSTER.
I'VE COME TO KNOW A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR PAST... AND UNDER-STAND IT.
YOU HAVE A HISTORY AND CONNECTION TO PEOPLE.
I MIGHT HAVE BEEN A MONSTER, YOU NEVER KNOW.
...
OH, RIGHT.
...
WOULD YOU PLEASE SHOW ME...
... THAT ..
... MARK?

WAS IT A TATTOO?
IF I REMEMBER, SHE SAID IT WAS ON YOUR RIGHT WRIST...
BURN SCARS ..,?
I BURNED IT OFF YEARS AGO.
A DISTINGUISHING MARK WOULD GET IN THE WAY OF MY WORK.
AND EVERY TIME I SEE SOMETHING RELATED TO MY PAST..
...I FEEL A SHARP PAIN DEEP INSIDE ME.
LIKE BEFORE.
...
SO...
...LOOKED AT ANOTHER WAY...

...THE PLACES AND THINGS THAT CAUSE YOU TO FEEL THAT PAIN...
...MUST HAVE A CONNECTION TO YOUR PAST.
DIDN'T SOMETHING LIKE THAT HAPPEN SOMEWHERE ONCE BEFORE?
...
YEAH.
...
SO YOU'RE REALLY...
...LEAVING ME?

...I'M ALSO NO LONGER YOUR FIANCÉ.
AND ...
YES.
I'M NO LONGER ...
...IN THE MILITARY.
...TO TELL MY TRUE PLANS.
IF I CALLED THIS COMPENSATION IT WOULD BE STRANGE, BUT...
...YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE I CAN TRUST..
...TO AMATA...
STARTING NOW...
...I'M ON A MISSION...
PLEASE, YOU MUST KEEP THIS A SECRET FROM EVERYONE... THE ARMY INCLUDED...
...AND, OF COURSE, FROM YOUR FATHER, THE GENERAL.

...TO CAPTURE ZEN...
...BEFORE THE ARMY DOES.
I WOULD LIKE YOU TO SEE THIS AS MY WAY...
...OF TAKING RESPONSIBILITY.
WH...?!
CAPTURE ZEN...?
SOMEONE AS OUTSTANDING AS MAJOR DAKAN KYRIE IS...
AND I'M JUST GOING TO WAIT HERE IN GALAY...?
...GOING TO RISK EVERYTHING TO TRY TO CAPTURE ZEN...
ZEN...
'TIL IT'S ALL OVER?

...YOURSELF.
DESTROY YOUR WORLD...
WAIT!
RIAN...
I AT LEAST...
...ALONG WITH YOU.
KYRIE, DEAR, TAKE ME...
ZEN, YOU...
...YOU ONCE SAVED ME.
...AS FAR AS THE BORDER.
...WANT TO SEE YOU...
I MADE A PACT WITH MYSELF ...
...TO DESTROY MY WORLD AND GO TO HIM.

THIS TIME ...
...I WILL SAVE YOU.
NOTHING YOU HAVE IS WORTH ANYTHING.
OF COURSE NOT!

I'M OLD ENOUGH. ALLOW ME TO RETIRE.
I'M THINKING OF DISBANDING ZENDO.
HOW MANY YEARS DO YOU THINK IT'S BEEN SINCE OUR BAND OF ROBBERS BROKE UP?
ZEN.
BIG SIS!
SIS!
YOU'LL BE FINE ON YOUR OWN.
DESTROY.
STEAL.
KILL.
THE SAME AS I'VE BEEN DOING.
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO FROM NOW ON?
WHAT ABOUT YOU?

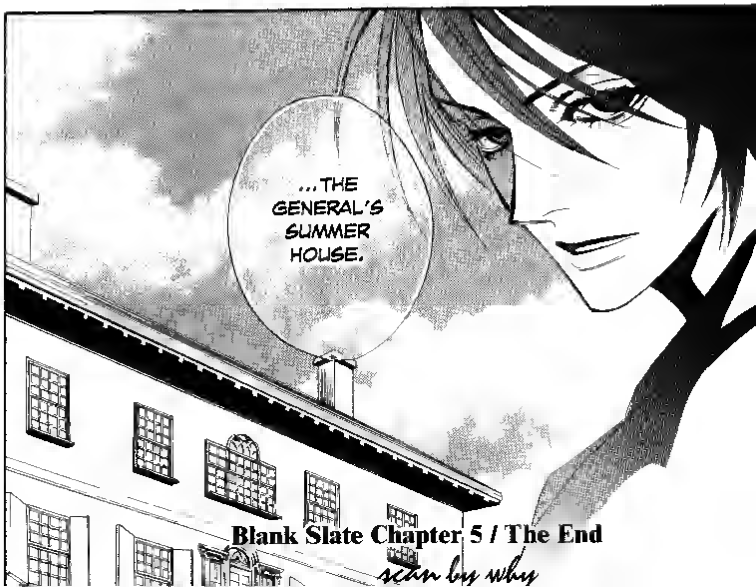
THE SISTERS OF ZENDO.
...
IF I'M ALONE ...
...I'LL BE FREE.
HUNH?
ARE YOU STILL IN CONTACT WITH YOUR COMRADES?
THEY'RE SCATTERED AROUND VARIOUS COUNTRIES, THOUGH.
...
A FEW.
HUNH?
...ALONG WITH MY THANKS FOR THE INFORMATION.
HERE, TAKE THIS GUN...
SWIP
scan by vhy

ZEN! WHAT ARE YOU...
!
...
THOSE FIVE...
BOIL 'EM... FRY 'EM... WHATEVER YOU WANT.
I CAN'T KEEP FUGITIVES IN MY HOUSE.
WE MIGHT BE REMOTE, BUT WE DO GET RADIO WAVES.
DON'T TAKE US FOR FOOLS!
SEND THEM OUT OF THE COUNTRY.
THERE'S NOTHING TO DO ABOUT IT.

IT'S USELESS, BUT THAT'S ALL WE CAN DO.
THIS IS A TRADE.
SAY YOUR THANKS TO *HIM*.
UH...
...THANKS!
IN EXCHANGE, *HE* WILL BE MY SACRIFICE.

...ZEN TAKING A PARTNER IS QUITE...
HOW-EVER ...
IMPULSIVE!
SO AS SOON AS YOU SHOW UP YOU LEAVE BEFORE THE SUN SETS?
With a trouble-some bonus to boot!
HAKKA ...
WASN'T IT?
I'M ENTRUSTING ZEN...
...TO YOU.
YOU, MA'AM, SHOULD ONLY WORRY ABOUT YOUR OWN HEALTH.
I TOLD YOU, CALL ME BIG SIS!

ZEN.
HAVE YOU DECIDED WHERE WE'RE GOING FROM HERE?
YES.
OUR NEXT DESTINATION IS...


...THE GENERAL'S SUMMER HOUSE.

第6話 Chapter Six
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BLANK SLATE
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THE GENERAL'S SUMMER HOUSE?

WHY?

ZE...
QUIET.
?!
!!
SH-SHU
MPFF
THE GALAYAN ARMY.
JUST AS I EXPECTED.
THEY TRACKED US DOWN IN NO TIME.

I WONDER IF IT'S ALL RIGHT. *HE'LL* BE FINE, BUT...
YOU MEAN THEM?
BIG SIS HAS MADE IT OUT OF THE FIRE HUNDREDS OF TIMES.
WHAT'S MORE, SHE'S COMPAS-SIONATE.
...
IN THE WORST-CASE SCENARIO, EVEN IF SHE ENDS UP DEAD, SHE'LL HELP THE OTHERS ESCAPE.
SHE...
...HELPED YOU. YOU OWE HER YOUR LIFE.
...
DON'T YOU HAVE ANY FEELINGS...
...TOWARD YOUR FRIENDS?
WHAT KIND OF FEELINGS?

...LOVE.
WORRY, FOR EXAMPLE... OR DREAD OF LOSING SOMETHING...
IN OTHER WORDS ...
IS THAT...
...SOMETHING YOU NEED IN ORDER TO SURVIVE?

...
WE CROSSED THE BORDER A LONG TIME AGO...
...RIAN.
WHAT ABOUT YOUR PROMISE TO GO ONLY AS FAR AS THE BORDER?
...

CAPTURING ZEN... THIS IS AN INCREDIBLY DIFFICULT TASK...
...AND HIGHLY RISKY.
THERE'S NO WAY I CAN ALLOW YOU TO GO ON WITH ME.
...
IF...
...HE MAKES ME TURN AROUND NOW...
...I MIGHT NOT EVER SEE ZEN AGAIN.
SORRY, I'M SELFISH...
...
KYRIE.
BUT CAN I STAY WITH YOU...
...JUST UNTIL WE REACH MY FATHER'S SUMMER HOUSE?
ACTUALLY... I TOLD MY FATHER THAT'S WHERE I'D BE.
I TOLD HIM I'D TRAVEL WITH A BUTLER...

...TO THE SUMMER HOUSE.
REALLY...
...THIS IS WHERE...?
IT WAS HERE THAT...
...MAKA...

WE'RE NOT GOING INSIDE?
THEN WHY DID WE...
SECURITY IS LAX, BUT WE DON'T NEED TO GO INSIDE.
WE'RE NOT HERE TO DROWN IN YOUR SAPPINESS.
MORE ACCURATELY... THERE IS ONE WITHIN THE GROUNDS.
THERE ISN'T ONE INSIDE.
THE GENERAL'S SUMMER HOUSE...
...DOESN'T HOLD A CLUE TO YOUR LOST MEMORY?

...IT'S PRETTY RUN-DOWN.
...GENERAL'S FAMILY CEMETERY...
FOR THE...
SO FAR AWAY?
I feel like we've walked a kilometer.
...CONNECTS THE SUMMER HOUSE TO HERE.
AN UNDER-GROUND PASSAGE...

ALL THE GRAVES HERE ARE FOR GALAYAN SOLDIERS WHO DIED IN THE LAST WAR.
WHEN I KIDNAPPED THE GENERAL'S DAUGHTER, I LEARNED ABOUT THIS PLACE.
Wandering Wind

...FEEL.
SO THAT MEANS...
...THERE'S SOME RELATION BETWEEN YOUR PAST AND THIS CEMETERY?
THE MOMENT I SAW IT...
A PAIN I SHOULDN'T...
...I FELT PAIN IN THE BACK OF MY HEAD.

MAYBE...
THERE'S A HIGH POSSIBILITY OF THAT.
IT COULD BE THE GRAVE OF SOMEONE YOU FOUGHT AND KILLED.
...
THERE AREN'T ANY NAMES.

SIX...
I DIDN'T GET A GOOD LOOK BEFORE, BUT, THESE GRAVE-STONES...
HUNH?
THREE...
FIVE...

THEY'RE NUMBERS...
ELEVEN
EIGHTEEN ...
THIRTEEN ...
ELEVEN ...

...AND THE DATE OF BIRTH AND DEATH...
ALONG WITH...
...SOLDIER OF THE GALAY ARMY...
ZEN...
...

TUNK
I WON'T TELL YOUR FATHER, THE GENERAL, ABOUT THIS.
THANK YOU.
RIAN.
OH KYRIE
...HAVE A SAY IN WHAT YOU DO.
I'M NO LONGER IN ANY POSITION TO...
!

YOU ...
... FIGURED OUT EVERY-THING, DIDN'T YOU...
AND YOU KNOW MY SECRET.
IN A SENSE, WE ARE PARTNERS IN CRIME.
KYRIE ..
I'D LIKE YOU TO..
...ANSWER ONE THING FOR ME.
BEFORE ...
... ZEN WAS HERE WITH YOU..
...WASN'T HE?
...
THERE'S NO NEED TO HIDE IT NOW.
I'M NO LONGER IN THE ARMY AND I'M NOT YOUR FIANCÉ..

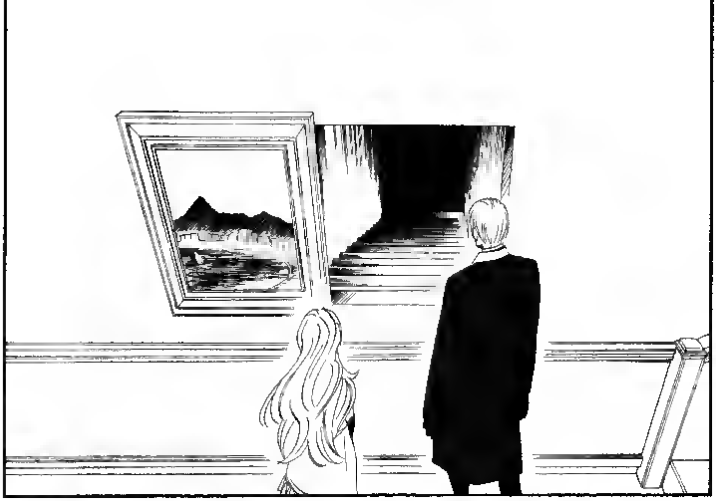
2

Blank Slate came about because I decided to start a manga with a villain as the main character, in contrast to my works up to that point, which had always featured a good man as the main character

The story as I first imagined it was really long, but it was so incredibly long that I decided to shorten it, and it ended up taking this form

Because of the change of direction, the characters and ending changed quite a lot. Some of the characters ended up getting treated poorly, so as the author I feel bad for them

(continued in sidebar 3)



THERE'S AN ESCAPE ROUTE HERE...
NOT TOO MANY PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT THIS PATH
ONLY A FEW OF MY FATHER'S CLOSEST FRIENDS...

...
...AND ZEN.

RIAN...
KYRIE...?
AS PART OF MY MISSION...
...I WANT TO UNDERSTAND ZEN'S RANGE OF ACTIVITY AS BEST I CAN.
IS THIS REALLY WHAT YOU SAW?
YOU'RE NOT MISTAKEN?

THE UNIT INSIGNIA THAT I SAW IN THE FLASHBACK...
WITHOUT MISTAKE... THIS IS IT.
...THEY WERE A UNIT IN THE GALAYAN ARMY.
SO IT SEEMS...
IT'S ON THE BACK OF ALL THE GRAVE-STONES...
...SO THAT MUST MEAN...

IN OTHER WORDS...
...YOU...
...WERE A GALAYAN SOLDIER.
scan by why

AND THE MAN WHO SHOT ME THAT TIME TOO.
...
HERE?!
IT CAN'T BE!
SHH!
THAT VOICE...
IT'S ZEN!
...I HAVEN'T SEEN A UNIT WITH THIS INSIGNIA.
HOWEVER...
EVEN THOUGH I SHOULD KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT THE GALAYAN ARMY.

NOBODY ...
...KNOWS ABOUT IT.
IT MUST BE A SPECIAL UNIT OF THE GALAYAN ARMY.
...
WHAT...?
WHAT ...
...IS HE TALKING ABOUT?
I MEAN, DOESN'T IT ALL FIT TOGETHER?
...A SPECIAL BLACK OPS UNIT OF THE GALAYAN ARMY...
FOR THE WAR OR... FROM EVEN EARLIER...
...THAT OFFERED SPECIAL TRAINING...
...TO CREATE THE MOST POWERFUL UNIT COMPOSED ENTIRELY OF SOLDIERS LIKE YOURSELF WITH SUPERHUMAN ABILITIES.

THEN... THEY WERE ALL KILLED DURING THE WAR.
THE MOST POWERFUL UNIT WAS?
OF COURSE, THAT IS STRANGE.
IF THEY WERE BEATEN BY THE OPPOSING ARMY, THEIR EXISTENCE WOULD HAVE BECOME KNOWN.
YOU WERE ALMOST KILLED BY SOMEONE WITHIN THIS SAME UNIT.
WHICH MEANS...
...THE CAUSE OF THEIR EXTINCTION PROBABLY CAME FROM WITHIN.
FOR EXAMPLE?
ZEN...
...
...WAS A GALAYAN SOLDIER ...?
FOR EXAMPLE ...
...BETRAYAL BY ONE OF THEIR OWN.

THE YEAR OF DEATH ON ALL THE GRAVESTONES IS FROM RIGHT BEFORE THE END OF THE WAR.
WHEN THE END OF THE WAR WAS IN SIGHT, THE GALAYAN GOVERNMENT CAME TO THINK THIS SECRET UNIT WAS IN THE WAY...
THERE COULD BE ALL KINDS OF REASONS.
IF YOU SUPPOSE THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED...
THEY WERE BETRAYED BY ONE OF THEIR OWN...
...AND EXTERMINATED.
...
THAT'S RIDICULOUS.

THE GALAYAN GOVERN-MENT...
MY FATHER ...
...DID SUCH A HORRIBLE THING?
THAT CAN'T BE.
THE GALAYAN ARMY WOULD NEVER...
IT'S ALL LIES!
WHO...?!
!
THE GALAYAN ARMY-

scan by why

DID HE SAY...
...RIAN?
CERTAINLY NOT THE GENERAL'S DAUGHTER...
THONK
AGH!

ZEN...?
DROP THE GUN.
EASY, MAJOR.
SHAK
...
...
...
K
YOU'RE...
...IN THE GALAYAN ARMY, RIGHT?

KYRIE
...
WELL, EITHER WAY... IT'S CERTAIN THAT YOU WERE IN THE ARMY, HUNH, KYRIE?
...
I'M NOT...
...A SOLDIER ANYMORE.

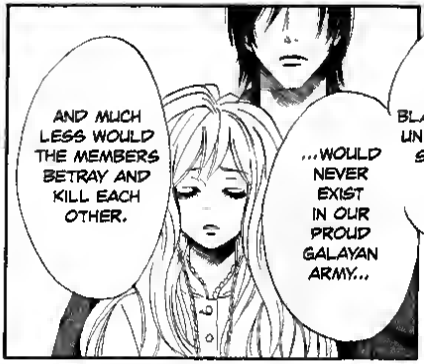
ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH A UNIT INSIGNIA THAT'S A BLACK FLAME?

COME ON.
DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH THAT ABSURDITY...
...YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT?

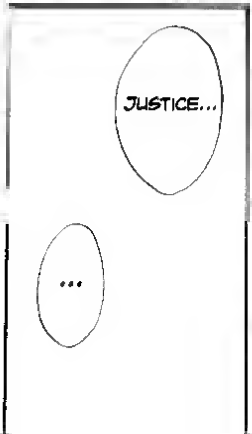
NO, I'M NOT.

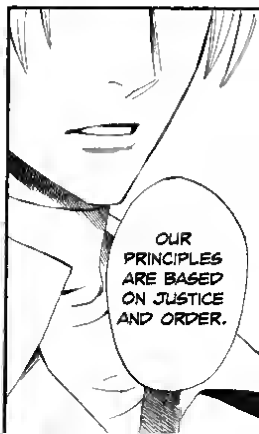
GRAVESTONES MARKED ONLY WITH NUMBERS AND A UNIT INSIGNIA NO ONE RECOGNIZES...
A HIDDEN CEMETERY...

ABSURDITY?


AND MUCH LESS WOULD THE MEMBERS BETRAY AND KILL EACH OTHER.
...WOULD NEVER EXIST IN OUR PROUD GALAYAN ARMY...

BLACK OPS UNITS AND SUCH...
ARE THESE TOO ALL ABSURDITY?


JUSTICE...
...


OUR PRINCIPLES ARE BASED ON JUSTICE AND ORDER.

STARTING A ONE-SIDED WAR...
...AND INVADING ANOTHER COUNTRY.. IS THAT JUST?
IT WASN'T AN INVASION.
IT WAS TO HELP THE AMATANS.
HELP? DON'T YOU KNOW HOW MANY AMATANS DIED IN THAT WAR?
WE..
...ONLY FIGHT WARS THAT ARE NECESSARY.

AK
SH
!
...WAR?
NECES-
SARY...
...
DOESN'T
EXIST!
THAT
JUST...

IS THIS MAN ...
...
THIS MAN WON'T SHOOT.
HE'S NOT PREPARED TO KILL ANYONE.
YOU CAN TELL BY LOOKING IN HIS EYES .. HE'S A COWARD.
...THE SAME AS BEFORE?
HIS EYES ARE NOW COMPLETELY...
HAKKA.
IS IT YOUR FIRST KILL?

scan by why

NO HESITATION.
NO ANXIETY.
...
ONLY ACTION.
PLEASE, WAIT.
ZEN...
...
I'LL... ASK HIM TO STOP FOLLOWING YOU...
KYRIE... ISN'T A SOLDIER ANYMORE.

EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE NOT A SOLDIER ANYMORE?
YOU FOLLOWED ME?
...
SO...
... PLEASE ...
HAKKA.
LEAVE HIM TO ME.
UM...
THAT'S ...
WHAT ARE YOU AFTER?
YOU...

I WAS DISGRACED. I QUIT MY UNIT.
...ALL I AM NOW... AS A PERSON... AS A MAN.
THIS IS...
...
I'M AFTER YOU.
I'M NOT AN IDIOT.
I'LL TURN YOU OVER TO THE ARMY.
IF YOU CATCH ME, THEN WHAT?
YOU GONNA KILL ME YOURSELF?
WHAT'S THE REASON YOU WON'T TELL ME?
WHAT IS YOUR REAL REASON?
YOU'VE GONE TO A LOT OF TROUBLE AND PLACED YOURSELF AT RISK.
IF YOU WANTED TO WIN BACK YOUR HONOR, YOU SHOULD HAVE REMAINED IN THE ARMY AND COME AFTER ZEN.

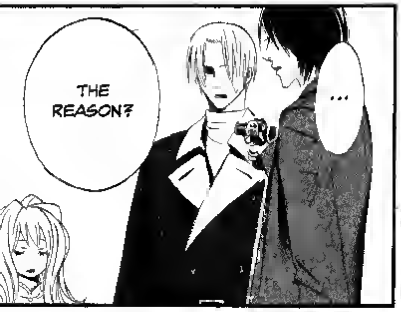
IT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE WORKING WITH SOME-ONE!
SAY IT.
RIAN.
WHO SENT THIS MAN?

TELL ME.
I HATE WAITING.
RIAN... DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME!
IF YOU DON'T SAY, I'LL KILL HIM.
I...
SEE YA, PAL.
UH...

BL
IT'S THE COLONEL!
NO ...
AM

...
THE COLONEL ...
THE COLONEL...
...IS OPERATING INDEPENDENTLY OF THE ARMY?
KYRIE?
IT'S ALL RIGHT.
I'M ALIVE, RIAN...

ZEN?
MAYBE...


THE REASON?
...

IT'S JUST AS RIAN SAYS.
THERE'S NO POINT IN LYING NOW...

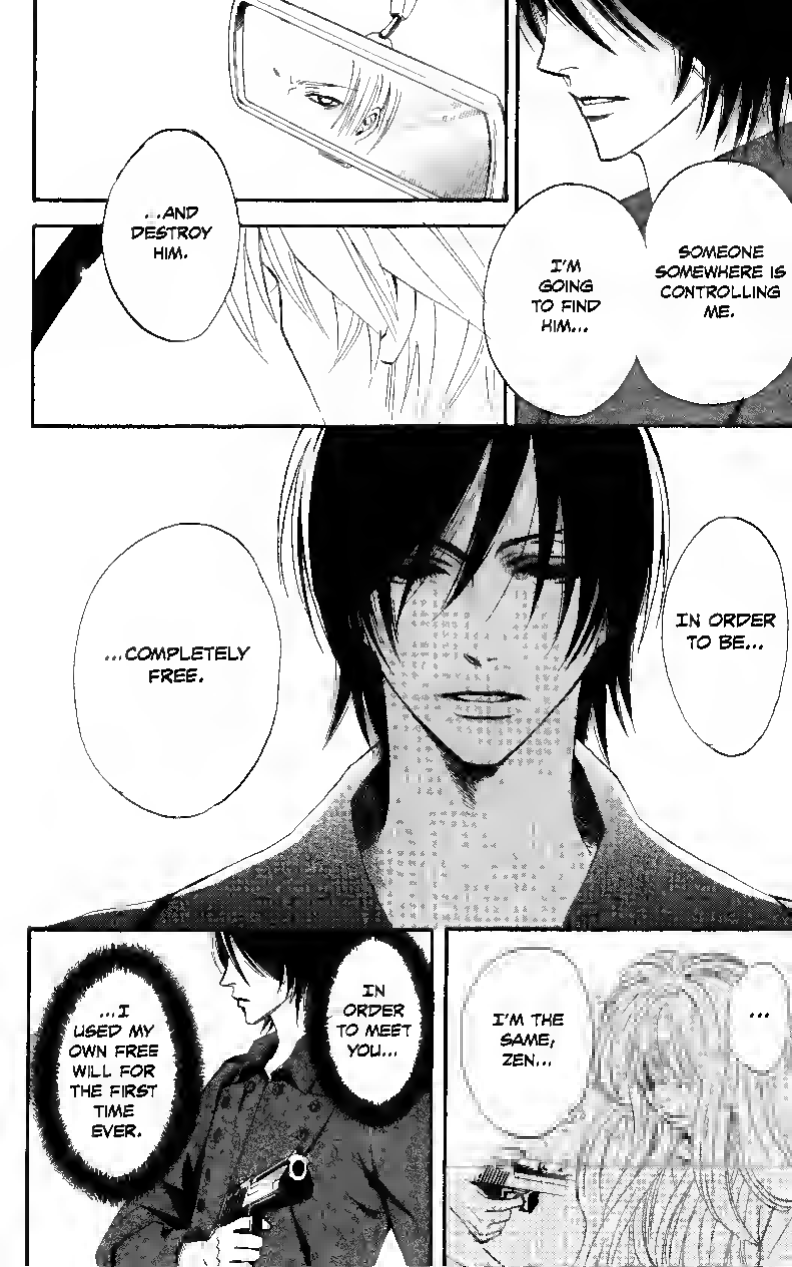
...

TO CAPTURE ...?
OR...

...MY PAST?
I DON'T, AND NEITHER DOES THE MAJOR.
I DON'T KNOW.
... DOES HE KNOW ...
WE HAVEN'T ...
BEEN TOLD ANYTHING.

WHY DON'T I...
...GO VISIT HIM MYSELF?
...
THIS IS A NIGHTMARE.

IT'S...
SO BE HAPPY.
YOU'LL COMPLETE YOUR MISSION.
...WOULD YOU TELL ME SOME-THING?
ZEN...
BUT NOW...
...JUST LIKE...
...THAT TIME.
...
WHY
...
...YOU SAID YOU WEREN'T INTERESTED IN YOUR PAST, SO...
BEFORE ...


...AND DESTROY HIM.
I'M GOING TO FIND HIM...
SOMEONE SOMEWHERE IS CONTROLLING ME.
...COMPLETELY FREE.
IN ORDER TO BE...
...I USED MY OWN FREE WILL FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER.
IN ORDER TO MEET YOU...
I'M THE SAME, ZEN...
...

...
IT'S ALL YOUR FANTASY.
I WANT TO BE FREE...
...A TERRIBLE TRUTH AWAITS...
...EVEN IF AHEAD...

scan by why

I HEAR YOU'RE ACTIVE ON THE EASTERN FRONT.
WHEN IS IT GOING TO CALM DOWN OVER THERE?
OUR COUNTRY... HAS PROSPERED BY FIGHTING OTHER COUNTRIES AND WINNING...
WE'VE SUCCEEDED SO FAR, AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO.
ALL THE DESTRUCTION AND CASUALTIES LEAD TO PEACE AND PROSPERITY IN THIS COUNTRY.
I WILL BE ABLE TO DELIVER THE GOOD NEWS BY THE NEW YEAR.
GOOD.

BLANK SLATE

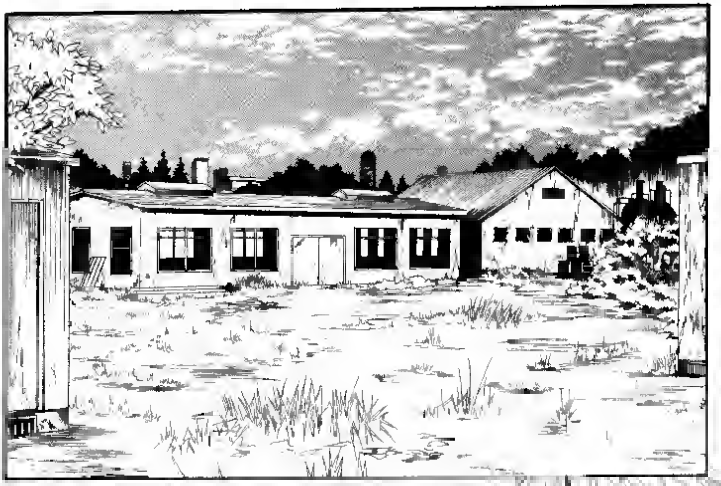
...GENERAL.

YES...

BLANK SLATE

scan by why

CHAPTER 7



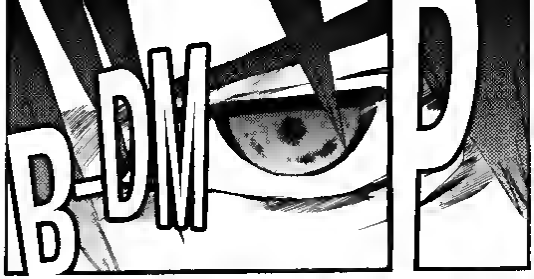
AFTER I CAPTURED YOU...
...THIS IS WHERE THE COLONEL WANTED ME TO HAND YOU OVER. IT'S AN ABANDONED BASE.
THIS PLACE...

IT'S NOT THAT FAR... FROM THAT CLIFF WHERE I WAS FOUND.
...
WHY THIS PLACE?
WHAT'S THIS...?
ZING
...
NOT FAR? WELL, I GUESS IT'S IN THE SAME MOUNTAIN RANGE, BUT...
We've easily crossed about five mountains.
THIS DÉJÀ VU...
...IS MUCH STRONGER THAN BEFORE.
I...
ZEN.

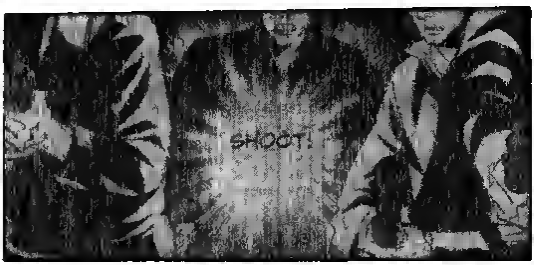
B-D M P
JUST TO BE SAFE, I'M GONNA GO TAKE A LOOK AROUND THE AREA.
OF ALL PEOPLE, I SHOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT LEAVING YOU ALONE... RIGHT?
I...
...DEFI-NITELY KNOW THIS PLACE.
...
WHAT HAP-PENED ..?
JUST NOW.
HE UNDER-ESTIMATES ME. BECAUSE I DON'T HAVE A GUN. .
...SOME-THING...
I TAKE A BACK SEAT TO YOU, YOU KNOW?
WHEN IT COMES TO ABILITY TO PERFORM.
THANKS TO YOU, THE COLONEL WILL...
...COME TO MEET US NOW THAT YOU HAVE CAPTURED ME.
ACCORDING TO YOUR ORDERS I'LL TAKE HIM TO THE SPECIFIED PLACE.

...REGULAR SOLDIERS WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO KEEP ME DOWN. YOU KNOW THAT PERSONALLY, RIGHT?
YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE ANY FALSE HOPES. EVEN IF THE COLONEL COMES WITH HIS SUBORDINATES...
I'LL TELL YOU RIGHT NOW.
OH F***...
THAT MAN IS MUCH BETTER SKILLED THAN YOUR ORDINARY SOLDIERS.
DON'T UNDER-ESTIMATE THE COLONEL...

COLONEL ...!
IT LOOKS LIKE HE'S COME ALONE.
B-D MP


B-DM P

MY MEMORY IS...


SHOOT!

!

THIS MAN ...

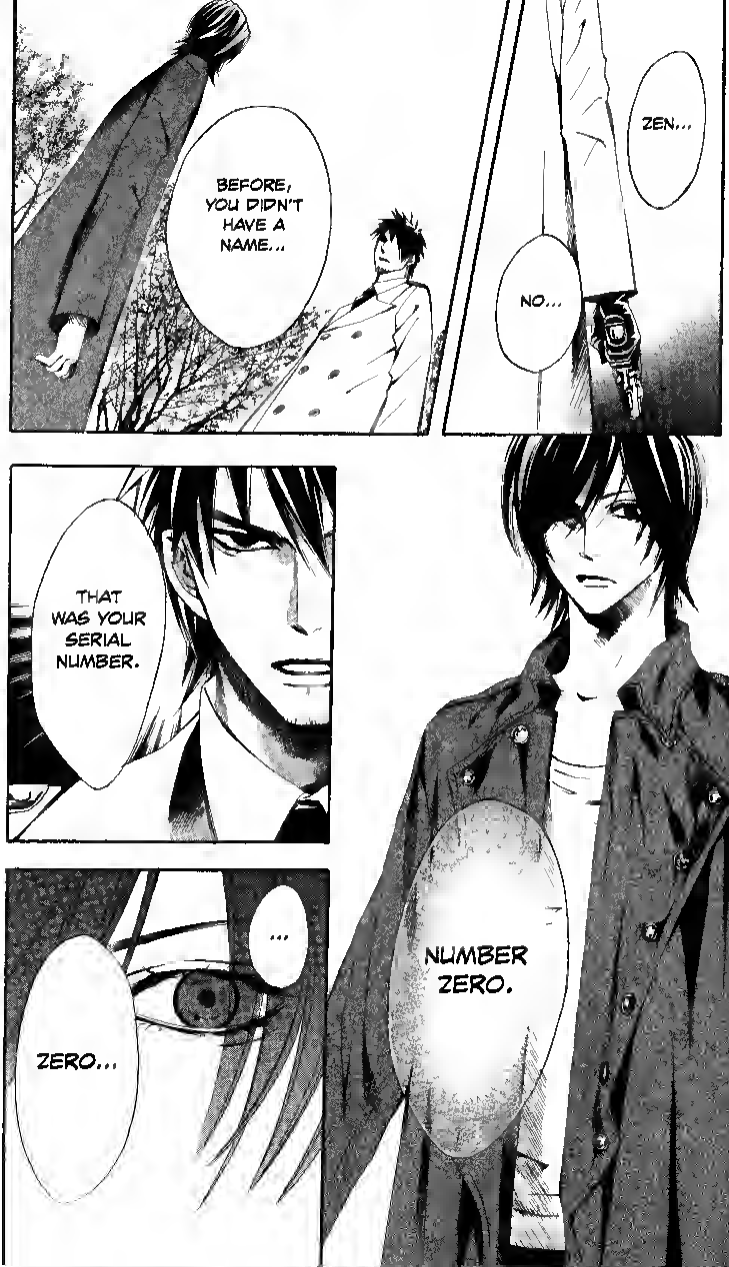
...WHO KILLED ME.
IT'S THE MAN...
LET RIAN GO,
...!!....
IT WAS YOU...!
COLONEL
...I'M SORRY..
IT'S ALL MY-
KYRIE.

NO MATTER HOW TOP-NOTCH A SOLDIER YOU MAY BE, IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO REIN IN THIS MAN.
YOU'VE DONE NOTHING WRONG.
THIS MAN IS...
...NO NORMAL HUMAN BEING.
YOU SEEM...
...TO KNOW AN AWFUL LOT...
...ABOUT ME.

DIDN'T YOU KILL ME?
BANG!
ME, YOUR ONE-TIME ...?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
WHAT DO I MEAN?

AND NOW...
...YOU PLAN ON KILLING ME AGAIN?
I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD...
OH...
...WELL...
NGH...
COLONEL!
ZEN...
WHAT...?
BL
AUM

I DON'T WANT TO FIGHT!
STOP IT!
GYAH!
BLAM
YOU SHUT UP.
I CAME HERE TO HELP YOU...!


ZEN...
NO...
BEFORE, YOU DIDN'T HAVE A NAME...
THAT WAS YOUR SERIAL NUMBER.
NUMBER ZERO.
...
ZERO...

...MY CHILDHOOD?
IS THIS...
YOU ARE ...
NUMBER ZERO
IT WAS ENGRAVED ON YOUR RIGHT WRIST.
IT WAS PROOF OF YOUR MEMBERSHIP.
OH... SO THAT WAS A NUMBER...!
WHAT'S HAPPENING?
D.M.P
D.
ZERO ...

scan by shy

...KNOWS THE TRUTH.
...SEEMS LIKE THIS MAN...
I'M SORRY YOU GOT INVOLVED, KYRIE.
IT DEFINITELY ...
ZE...
WH...
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, COLONEL?
BUT ...
I'LL TELL YOU EVERY-THING..
...RIAN.
PLEASE, TELL ME EVERYTHING.
I'M READY.
...
IT MAY BE HARD FOR YOU TO HEAR, BUT...
...IT'S PROBABLY BETTER YOU KNOW.

NOW, IT WASN'T TOO LONG AGO... VERY FEW KNEW THIS BASE EXISTED.

...WAS USED AS THE BASE FOR A CERTAIN SPECIAL FORCE.
ONCE THIS BASE ...

TWENTY YEARS AGO...

A BASE IN A PLACE LIKE THIS...?
MAJOR GIA...
A TOP-SECRET SPECIAL UNIT... HUNH?
I DEPLORE... THAT ELITIST ATTITUDE OF OUR ARMY.
WHAT I'M GOING TO TELL YOU DOESN'T LEAVE THIS ROOM...
YOU'RE NOT A PURE GALAYAN, BUT...
...IT'S A WASTE TO HAVE SOMEONE AS TALENTED AS YOU STUCK AT SUCH A REMOTE BASE.

...DON'T HAVE AN OFFICIAL NAME.
YOU...
I'D LIKE YOU TO COMMAND A CERTAIN UNIT.
...
ASSAS-SINATION... DESTRUC-TION...
AN UNDERGROUND UNIT TO TAKE CARE OF THE DIRTY WORK.
THEY'RE YOUNG IN YEARS, BUT THEY'RE THE SAME AS YOU...
THESE SOLDIERS MAY BE EVEN MORE CAPABLE.
BUT THEY'RE JUST KIDS...
OH, ZERO.

scan by whos

AS I SAID THIS MORNING, WE'RE GOING TO HAVE A RECEPTION FOR THE NEW CHIEF...
...SO GATHER EVERYONE TOGETHER AS ALWAYS.
THIS MAN SURE HAS A PRETTY FACE.
WITH THAT HAIR AND EYE COLOR, I'M BETTING...
...YOU'RE FROM YAMA... I AM TOO...
I AM SERIAL NUMBER ZERO.
AND NOTHING ELSE.
...
HIS EYES ARE LIKE A MARIONETTE'S.

THEY'RE ALL LIKE MARIONETTES, AREN'T THEY?
ALL OF THE MEN HERE...
AND NOT JUST HIS.
WE GROOMED THEM ALL FOR THIS UNIT... THEY DON'T HAVE ANY CONNECTIONS...
NONE OF THEM HAVE NAMES OR HOMETOWNS -...
YEAH.
THEY ARE *HUMAN WEAPONS* THAT WERE MADE FOR THE SOLE PURPOSE OF FIGHTING.
THROUGH HARD, RELENTLESS TRAINING AND PHYSICAL ENHANCEMENT THEY HAVE ACQUIRED FIGHTING SKILLS THAT FAR SURPASS THOSE OF NORMAL SOLDIERS.
THEY'VE BEEN CULTIVATED SINCE THEY WERE CHILDREN... THEIR ONLY LOYALTY IS TO GALAY.

WHILE YOU GO ON IN PUBLIC ABOUT FREEDOM AND EQUALITY AND OTHER ROMANTIC IDEAS...
SINCE THEY'RE NOT REALLY GALAYANS YOU CAN TREAT THEM AS HORRIBLY AS YOU WANT.
HUNH?
I SEE... SO THERE AREN'T ANY GALAYANS IN THIS UNIT?
..DIDN'T WANT TO.. TAKE PART IN THIS...
IN TRUTH, I...
THIS IS THE WAY IT IS BEHIND THE SCENES IN THIS COUNTRY.
YOU WERE THREATENED?
CHANGING PEOPLE'S BODIES AND PERSONALITIES TO SUIT OUR NEEDS..
I'M SORRY.. BUT NOW I, UH... I MUST OPERATE ON YOU, TOO.
YES.
BUT..

YEAH, BUT YOU DON'T NEED TO PUT ME UNDER.
HEIGHTENING YOUR SENSES, ENHANCING YOUR PHYSICAL ABILITIES, INHIBITING THE AGING PROCESS...
...NO NORMAL PERSON WILL EVER BE ABLE TO DEFEAT YOU.
I WON'T TOLERATE ANYONE MESSING WITH MY HEAD.
I'LL BE LEADING ONE UNIT AND WILL INVADE VIA A DIFFERENT ROUTE. WE'LL CLEAN UP THE REMAINING ENEMY AND THEN JOIN YOU.

3

The character who got the worst treatment was Kyrie. At first he was going to play a role as an extremely important character, but, well, you can see how he turned out...

The paths that each of the characters take ended up running in directions different from what I at first imagined, but it's almost as if the characters themselves chose the paths down which they would go, so I don't have any regrets.

Anyway, this was a hard manga to create.

I am grateful from the bottom of my heart to my assistants and to all the people whom I inconvenienced and who helped me out. And lastly, I'd like to express my thanks to all you readers who have been with me.

DON'T GET YOURSELVES KILLED.
KEEP YOURSELF ALIVE, AND WE'LL MEET AGAIN.
BOOM

scan by why

I GUESS THERE WAS NO NEED TO WORRY ABOUT YOUR LIVES.
KEEP YOURSELF ALIVE, AND WE'LL MEET AGAIN.
IT DIDN'T EVEN TAKE TEN MINUTES.
YEAH.
IT'S SORT OF MY TRADEMARK PHRASE... BUT...
BEFORE OUR MISSIONS ...
...THAT'S WHAT YOU ALWAYS SAY.
IT'S THE FIRST TIME I'VE EVER HEARD A SUPERIOR OFFICER SAY SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
WE SOLDIERS WERE TAUGHT THAT TO FIGHT AND DIE FOR GALAY... IS SOMETHING TO BE PROUD OF.
...
...WISHING FOR YOUR COMPANIONS' AND SUBORDINATES' SAFETY IS NORMAL.

...WAS PROBABLY DEDICATED TO HIS FAMILY AND FRIENDS, TOO.
THIS MAN...
...
I SUPPOSE THEIR DEATH IS A PROUD SACRIFICE FOR THEIR COUNTRY.
HE FOUGHT TO PROTECT HIS COUNTRY AGAINST INVADERS...
KEEP YOURSELF ALIVE...
...AND WE'LL MEET AGAIN.
...NOT SOMETHING WE CAN FACE WITH PRIDE.
THE MISSION OF THIS UNIT IS...
TO US... IS GALAY... SOMETHING TO BE PROUD OF?
ZERO, TO GALAY ARE WE... NO...

I... DON'T REALLY UNDERSTAND.
NO, RATHER ...
IF THESE EVER BECOME WOUNDED.. THE GOVERNMENT WILL NOT HESITATE TO KILL THEM.
THE FEW PEOPLE THEY MEET LOOK AT THEM WITH FEAR AND CONTEMPT.
THERE IS ONLY CONTINUING BATTLE... AND THAT IS ALL WE NEED TO EXIST.
FOR US THERE IS NO DAILY LIFE... NOT EVEN FAMILY... TO RETURN TO.
...THEY'RE HUMAN.
THEY'RE NOT MARIONETTES...
THE GOVERNMENT... ...STARTED THE WARS AND MAY HOPE THAT ALL SUPER SOLDIERS DIE IN THEM.
THESE ...

THE FIGHTING WILL END SOMETIME.
I... WILL PUT AN END TO YOUR FIGHTING.
...FOR THIS ROTTEN COUNTRY'S WARS.
IT'S NOT WORTH LAYING DOWN ONE'S LIFE...
COMMANDER

WE COMPLETED OUR MISSION.
UNTIL THAT TIME COMES...
FIGHT AND FIGHT ...
GOOD WORK.
...AND KEEP BREATHING.
THE TIME WILL COME WHEN I WILL PUT AN END TO THE FIGHTING.

IT CAN'T BE...
I DON'T BELIEVE...
...MY FATHER?
YES...
...THE TRUTH.
...
RIAN
...
THIS IS..
A UNIT LIKE THAT.. REALLY EXISTED.
...
COLONEL GIA, WAS THE MASTERMIND ...
A COUNTRY OF JUSTICE ...
...
BUT THAT'S ...
...AND THE TRUTH BEHIND ITS CREATION...
AND?

...WHAT ARE YOU AFTER?
IN THE END...
SW
I CAN'T BE SURE HE'S TELLING THE TRUTH.
I WANT TO HELP YOU.
IT'S JUST LIKE I SAID FROM THE START...
BUT...
THIS MAN MUST KNOW THE TRUTH.
...HE WILL DO ANYTHING HE CAN TO WIPE YOU OUT.
IF THE GENERAL LEARNS THAT YOU ARE ZERO...
NOW, ONLY THE GENERAL AND MYSELF ACCURATELY REMEMBER WHAT REALLY HAPPENED.
THAT UNIT HAS BEEN A DIRTY SECRET. THE GOVERNMENT DOESN'T WANT ANYONE TO KNOW.

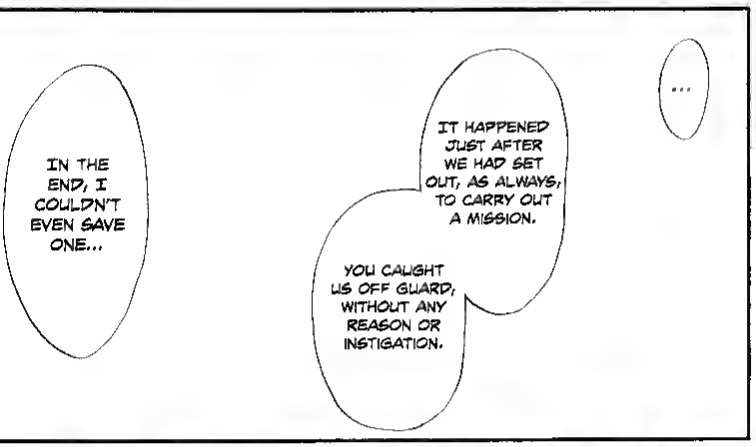
TO WASH AWAY HIS SINS?
...
BUT THAT'S ...
...
IN ORDER TO GET POSITION AND AUTHORITY... YOU USED US AS A SACRIFICE.
WHAT'S MORE, YOU'RE NOT A GALAYAN.
...AREN'T ENOUGH TO CLAW ONE'S WAY TO COLONEL IN THIS WAR FOR WORLD POWER.
PRETTY WORDS ALONE...
...YOU EXTERMINATED THEM ON ORDERS FROM THE GOVERNMENT.
WHEN THE AMATAN WAR ENDED AND THE BLACK OPS UNIT GOT IN THE WAY...
scan by ...

ZERO... DO YOU...
...REMEMBER FIGHTING ME SEVERAL DAYS AGO WHEN WE WERE REUNITED?
SO YOU REALLY DON'T KNOW...
I'M TALKING ABOUT THE TIME YOU DESTROYED THE PRISON.
THAT TIME WHEN... SOMETHING WAS CONTROLLING ME...
IT SEEMS AS IF YOU'VE... LOST YOUR MEMORY OF THOSE MOMENTS.
IT WAS THE SECOND TIME I'VE SEEN YOU GO INTO A TRANCE AND, THOUGH I DON'T KNOW WHY...
...GO BERSERK, AS IF SOMETHING WERE MANIPULATING YOU.

THE SECOND TIME?
THE FIRST TIME WAS 20 YEARS AGO...
THE DAY OUR UNIT WAS WIPED OUT.
THE ONE WHO KILLED OUR ENTIRE UNIT...
...WAS YOU... ZERO.

ZERO ...!
STOP!

I...
...KILLED THEM ALL?


...
IT HAPPENED JUST AFTER WE HAD SET OUT, AS ALWAYS, TO CARRY OUT A MISSION.
YOU CAUGHT US OFF GUARD, WITHOUT ANY REASON OR INSTIGATION.
IN THE END, I COULDN'T EVEN SAVE ONE...

...
THERE WAS NO OTHER WAY... TO STOP YOU.
INDEED, THE ONE WHO CHASED YOU WHEN YOU FLED... AND HAD YOU SHOT... WAS ME.

IF THIS IS ALL TRUE...
...YOU MUST BE HOLDING A GRUDGE AGAINST ME.
I HAD ALWAYS PLANNED ON EVENTUALLY SETTING YOU FREE... BUT...
...I NEVER THOUGHT I'D LOSE YOU LIKE THAT...
ZERO...
NO...
...YOU DIDN'T ACT OF YOUR OWN WILL... I'VE BECOME CERTAIN OF THAT.
...
THIS TIME... I'M SURE I'LL BE ABLE TO SAVE YOU.
...COME WITH ME.

COLONEL...
ZEN!
HAKKA,
BE CARE-FUL... ZEN.

DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING HE SAYS.
I'VE GOT A FEELING... HE'S DANGEROUS.
...
...HE WAS GALAY'S LAPDOG.
FOR 20 YEARS...

BUT...
OH! I SEE...
THE OTHER MAN IS YOU...
...HAKKA.

DOCTOR GENO!
IT WAS YOU!

GENO...?

WHAT'S GOING ON?
DON'T YOU REMEMBER?
HOW CAN THAT...
...?
YOU LOST ...!
...ALL OF YOUR MEMORY...?
BUT DOCTOR...
...IF THAT'S SO, WHY HAVEN'T YOU REVEALED YOUR TRUE IDENTITY?
BUT IT'S POSSIBLE, CONSIDERING YOUR NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE.
SO THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED?
I THOUGHT SOMETHING WAS STRANGE ...

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
RIDICU-LOUS.
THERE'S NO WAY I'D MISTAKE YOU. YOU'RE...
ZEN.
YOU KNOW... YOU CAN'T TRUST HIM.
DON'T LET HIM FOOL YOU.
!!

...ARE YOU PLANNING?
WHAT...?

THAT'S WHAT I WANT TO KNOW.
...

DON'T MOVE.
MOVE EVEN A LITTLE BIT MORE...
...AND I'LL KILL YOU.

BELIEVE ME...
...ZERO.
COLONEL... OH F***...
ZEN...

THIS MAN...
...HIS NAME ISN'T HAKKA.
HE'S DOCTOR... GENO BIGGINS.

scan by why

ZEN...
...THIS MAN IS TRYING TO USE YOU.
HE WAS THE DOCTOR...
WHAT ARE YOU AFTER?
YOU BASTARD...
DON'T MOVE.
...PERFORMING OPERATIONS ON OUR UNIT'S SOLDIERS.
PUT DOWN YOUR GUN.
ZERO...!

BL AM

...!
ZEN...!
...

I WON'T FIGHT WITH YOU.
HOW LIKE YOU...
...COMMANDER GIA...
I SHOULD'VE KNOWN...

...NO NORMAL HUMAN CAN KILL YOU.
THE ONLY WAY IS TO ERASE HIS RATIONAL RESTRAINTS.
I WILL SET YOU FREE...
...ZERO.

第8話 Chapter Eight

scan by why

I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR THIS TIME...
...
THE MOMENT... COLONEL...
...WHEN I COULD GET REVENGE ON YOU... AND ON GALAY...
IF STEALING IS A SIN...

...THEN ALL LIVING THINGS ARE EVIL.

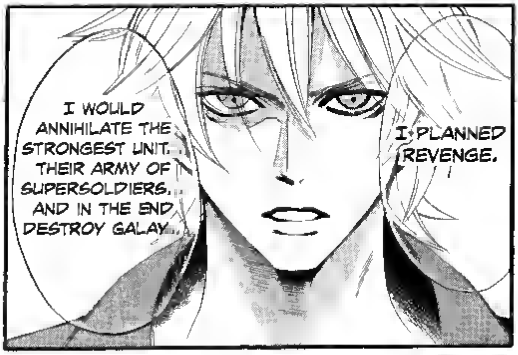
YES, THAT'S RIGHT.
GALAY FORCED ME INTO THE ARMY...
...SO THAT I COULD MAKE HUMAN WEAPONS.
DON'T BE RIDICULOUS!
DOCTOR ...
...YOU WERE ALSO AFFILIATED WITH THE ARMY, RIGHT?
THEN...
...IT TOOK EVERYTHING FROM ME.
GENO BIGGINS!

I READ YOUR THESIS "MEASURES FOR ENHANCEMENT OF PHYSICAL CAPABILITIES THROUGH IMPROVED REGENERATIVE MEDICINE" WITH GREAT INTEREST.
HOWEVER IT'S WRITTEN WITH AN AIR OF INDIFFERENCE TOWARD THE ARMY.
THERE'S A RUMOR THAT AMATAN GUERILLAS ARE HIDING OUT IN YOUR FIANCÉE'S VILLAGE... YADO, WAS IT CALLED?
IF YOU COOPERATE, WE MAY JUST OVERLOOK IT AS A RIDICULOUS RUMOR.
GALAY USED ME, BUT IN THE END...

scan by why

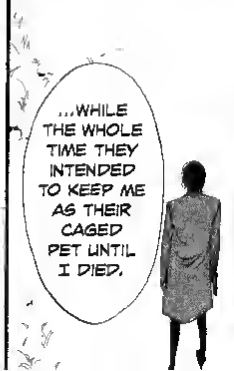
THEY WERE COMPLETELY DESTROYED.
MISSION 905, CAMPAIGN GUERILLA CLEAN-UP, HAS BEEN COMPLETED.
YES.
NO SURVIVORS ARE LEFT IN YADO.
IN ORDER TO KEEP THE EXISTENCE OF THE BLACK OPS UNIT SECRET...
...AND IN FEAR OF INFORMATION LEAKS...THEY KILLED EVERY AMATAN THAT WAS RELATED TO ME IN ANY WAY, SPARING NO ONE.

IT CAN'T BE...
THAT VILLAGE ...

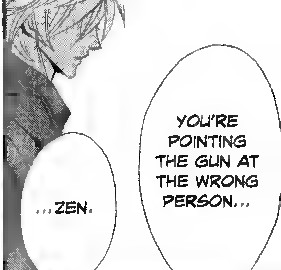

I WOULD ANNIHILATE THE STRONGEST UNIT. THEIR ARMY OF SUPERSOLDIERS... AND IN THE END, DESTROY GALAY...
I PLANNED REVENGE.

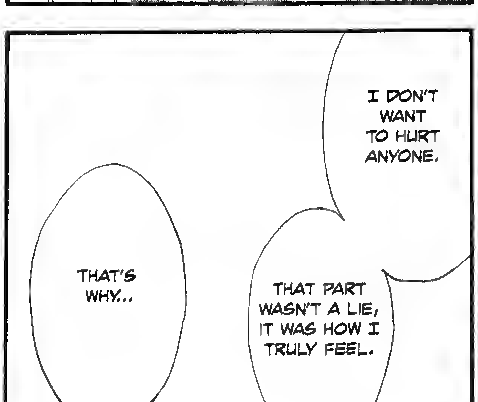
THE ARMY HAD ME UNDER HOUSE ARREST.
THEY LED ME TO BELIEVE THAT THE VILLAGE WOULD BE SAFE...

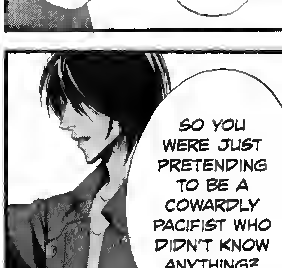
...ZERO.
...BY USING YOU...


...WHILE THE WHOLE TIME THEY INTENDED TO KEEP ME AS THEIR CAGED PET UNTIL I DIED.

SO ZERO'S RAMPAGE...
WHAT...?
AND MY PLAN HAS SUCCEEDED.
IT WAS YOU, RIGHT?
THE ONE WHO WAS CONTROLLING ME.


YOU'RE POINTING THE GUN AT THE WRONG PERSON...
...ZEN.


I DON'T WANT TO HURT ANYONE.
THAT'S WHY...
THAT PART WASN'T A LIE, IT WAS HOW I TRULY FEEL.


SO YOU WERE JUST PRETENDING TO BE A COWARDLY PACIFIST WHO DIDN'T KNOW ANYTHING?

MY REVENGE...
...I HAD TO GET RID OF THE SOURCE OF EVIL.

...WILL SOON BE COMPLETE.
...TO CRUSH THE COLONEL, THE GENERAL, AND DESTROY GALAY...

SO, ZERO...
...KILL THE COLONEL.
I ONLY ACT FOR MYSELF.
BL
AM
WHATEVER TRIES TO CONTROL ME...
...WHATEVER IT MAY BE... I WILL BEAT DOWN.

YOU MAY HAVE LIVED YOUR LIFE BELIEVING SO, BUT...
...FOR 20 YEARS... YOU HAVE BEEN CONTROLLED.
BY A FEW WORDS.
WORDS ...?
BE CAREFUL... ZERO!
IT LOOKS LIKE HE'S GOT SOMETHING UP HIS SLEEVE.
TWENTY YEARS AGO IT WAS HIS WORDS THAT PROBABLY...
WORDS THAT...
... CONTROL ME.

THAT TIME ...
HM?
IT CAN'T BE...
I SEE.
ZERO!
IF YOUR WORDS WERE THE TRIGGER...
...THOSE WORDS...
...AFTER I HEARD...

HYPNOSIS.
KEEP YOURSELF ALIVE...
...AND WE'LL MEET AGAIN.
THAT'S WHAT YOU ALWAYS SAY.
YEAH, IT'S SORT OF MY TRADE-MARK PHRASE.
B-D

KEEP YOURSELF ALIVE, AND WE'LL MEET AGAIN.
ZEN...

YOU MADE THE WORDS I ALWAYS SAID BEFORE A STRIKE...
...THE TRIGGER FOR HIM TO FALL INTO A HYPNOTIC STATE.
!
URG...
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM

scan by why

COLO-
NEL...!
Why?
KNOCK

AGH
AK
KR
THOK

4

Cooperation in production

Shimada san

Kawashima san

Komuma-san

Sayaka-san

Kuwana san

Tanaka-san

Nishizawa-san

Abe san

Okazaki-san

Kaneko-san

Takahashi-san

Ukeguchi san

Special Thanks

Rei-san

S-numa san

Fans who sent in letters

Thank you for reading I hope we ll meet again in a different manga

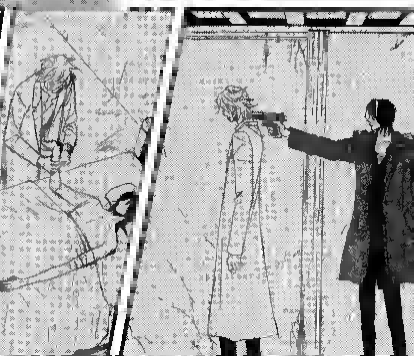
...WHILE MAKING ANTI-GOVERNMENT CONNECTIONS.
I CHANGED MY NAME AND BECAME AN UNDERGROUND DOCTOR IN AN AMATAN VILLAGE...

THE COLONEL WON'T KILL ZERO.
...I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR REVENGE.
HESITATE ON THE BATTLEFIELD AND YOU DIE...
EVER SINCE THAT DAY...

...YOU, ZERO, A DEAD MAN, SHOWED UP.
THEN THAT DAY...

...TO TAKE ON THE COLONEL OR THE GALAYAN ARMY.
BUT I DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH POWER...

...I KNEW IT WAS YOU AT FIRST GLANCE.
SINCE YOU HAD BEEN MY EXPERIMENTAL SUBJECT AND WE HAD WORKED CLOSELY TOGETHER...

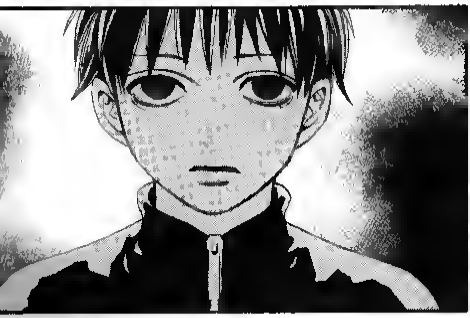


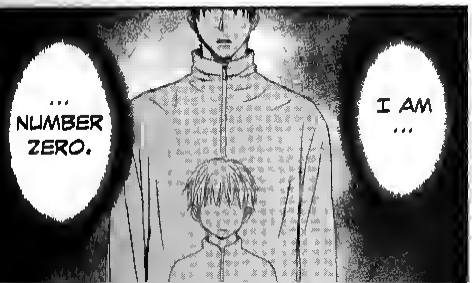
I THANKED GOD.
WHEN I EXAMINED YOU, I REALIZED YOU'D LOST YOUR MEMORY, BUT MY HYPNOSIS WAS STILL THERE.
RIAN...
...WAS ALSO LIVING THOSE 20 YEARS FOR NOTHING BUT REVENGE.
MAKA, WHO SURVIVED BECAUSE SHE JUST HAPPENED TO BE AWAY FROM THE VILLAGE THAT DAY...
IN THE END IT'S AS IF MAKA EXCHANGED HER LIFE...
...TO GIVE ME THE MOST EFFECTIVE WEAPON FOR MY REVENGE...
OH MAKA, IS THAT THE KIND OF LIFE YOU WANTED?
WHY DID I COME HERE...?
AND ME...?
DECADES MAY PASS, BUT HATE DOESN'T GO AWAY.
MAKA ...

ZERO...
...THERE'S NO WAY I'M GOING TO DIE YET.
I WON'T LET YOU DIE TWICE!

SPAK
WAKE UP, ZERO!
IT'S NO USE, COLONEL.
AS LONG AS I DON'T BREAK HIS HYPNOSIS, HE WON'T RETURN TO HIS RIGHT MIND...
KEEP YOURSELF ALIVE, AND WE'LL MEET AGAIN.
WHEN YOU HEAR THOSE WORDS...
...YOU WILL KILL...
...ANYONE AFFILIATED WITH THE GALAYAN ARMY IN THAT PLACE.

...YOU CAN'T STOP FIGHTING.
UNTIL YOU'VE KILLED THEM ALL...
DESTROY ANYONE AFFILIATED WITH GALAY.
KILL!
KILL THE ENEMY!
KILL!





KILL!

KILL!

YOU...

KILL ANYONE IN THE WAY!

...BEEN CONTROLLED.
THAT'S HOW YOU HAVE ALWAYS...
THAT'S RIGHT, NUMBER ZERO.

IT'S NOTHING LESS THAN A RESPONSE TO ALL OF THE CONDITIONING AND TRAINING YOU'VE HAD SINCE CHILDHOOD.
THE WAY YOU THINK, AS WELL.

KILL THE ENEMY!

KRUMP
PANT
PANT
WHO AM I?
KR
UR
NK
...
DOCTOR ...!
YOUR... HATE TOWARD ME AND GALAY MAY BE UNDER-STANDABLE...

...HAD THEIR FREEDOM TAKEN FROM THEM AND WERE BRAINWASHED... THEY WERE FORCED TO FIGHT FOR GALAY.
...AND THE MEN IN THAT UNIT...
...BUT ZERO...
...
YOU KILLED EVERYONE WHO WAS IMPORTANT TO ME... THAT FACT DOESN'T CHANGE.
JUST LIKE... YOU, RIGHT?
THEY'RE VICTIMS...
OF COURSE IT IS.
...
IS THAT REALLY TRUE?
IF ZEN DIES AT THE SAME TIME THAT I KILL YOU AND THE GENERAL... AND DESTROY GALAY...
...THEN MY REVENGE WILL BE COMPLETE.

SHF
!!
TH
OK
NNK...
ZE...
...RO...
...
NGN
...
KRK

KYRIE?!
...
OH F***... I'M LOSING TOO MUCH BLOOD.
...!!
KSH
F
F
AAAGH!!
COLONEL ...
BEFORE I LOSE CONSCIOUSNESS ...
GNK
KRK
KRK

KILL THE ENEMY, NUMBER ZERO!
WHO AM I...?
KILL ...
...IS NUMBER ZERO.
MY NAME ...
NUMBER ZERO.
ZERO ...
ZERO.
ZERO ...

KYRIE...
WHAT'S HAPPENING?
IS ZEN...
KYRIE...?
RIAN...
...IT ENDS HERE.
ALL OF IT.
ZERO ...?

ZEN!
MY NAME...
MY...
B-DMP
DIE.

RL
AM
FL
UMP
NNGN...
RI...
...AN...

...
ZE...
N...
B-DM
...,
NUMBER
ZERO.
NOW,
KILL THE
ENEMY..

BLAM BLA M BLA

I...
oooAM
ZEN.
RIAN.
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE!
IT CAN'T BE...
!
SLIP
ZE...
...N...
I'M... GLAD.

...BY MY OWN FREE WILL...
...I THOUGHT... AND... ACTED.
FOR THE FIRST TIME...
...SINCE I WAS BORN...
...AM...FREE...
I...
ZE...
...

ZERO...
...NOT ZERO.
I'M...
STILL, I CAN HANDLE YOU!
NO!
MY CONTROL IS GETTING WEAKER...?

HAKKA...
HE'S SO FAST..!
YOU'VE BEEN REALLY WICKED.
JUST LIKE I THOUGHT.
YOU'VE SURVIVED SO MUCH DAMAGE...
YOU REALLY ARE A MONSTER...

IT'S TOO BAD.
...
YEAH, IT IS.
!
IT'S TOO BAD...
I WAS OUT OF BULLETS A LONG TIME AGO.

ZERO...
...
...YOU JUST HELPED ME...
...
I CAN'T BELIEVE ...
HA HA...
DOCTOR GENO...
WHY DON'T YOU COME WITH ME.
I'M GOING TO...
...STAGE A COUP D'ETAT IN THIS COUNTRY.

EVERY-THING WAS FOR THAT.
I'VE PREPARED FOR IT.
WORKING AT GALAY'S BECK AND CALL THESE LONG YEARS...
ZERO ...
FOR THE TIME WHEN I COULD... TOPPLE THE CURRENT REGIME AND CHANGE THE COUNTRY.
SO THAT...
...VICTIMS SUCH AS YOURSELF AND ZEN NEVER EXIST AGAIN...
...JOIN ME...
LONG AGO...
...I SWORE TO YOU...
...AND FIGHT, DOCTOR.
... THAT I WOULD DEFI-NITELY END...
...
... FIGHT.
... YOUR ...

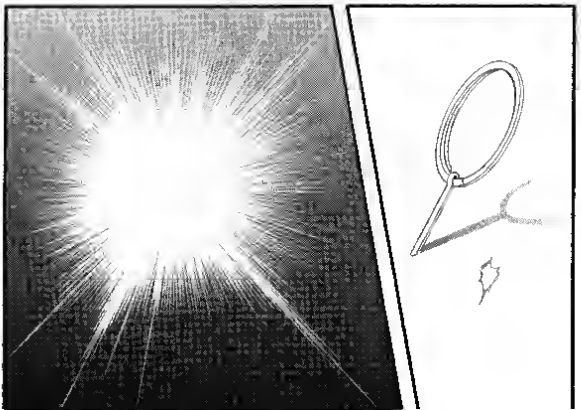
...
DESTRUCTION ALONE WON'T CHANGE THE WORLD.
I CAN'T ...
...GO WITH YOU.
DOCTOR ...
DON'T COME ANY CLOSER!

EARLIER ...
...WHEN I WAS LOOKING AROUND... I FOUND LARGE AMOUNTS OF ABANDONED WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION.
IF MY PLAN HAD FAILED... I INTENDED TO BLOW MYSELF UP AND TAKE YOU WITH ME.
!
I NO LONGER...
...
BUT... THERE'S NO NEED FOR THAT ANYMORE.
...HAVE THE COURAGE...
...TO LIVE IN A NEW WORLD.

...I'LL BE WAITING FOR YOU IN HELL.
ZEN...
THIS PLACE...
...IS JUST LIKE IT WAS 20 YEARS AGO.

BUT...
...ME.
JUST LIKE...
JUST LIKE BEFORE.
IT'S LIKE TIME HAS LEFT IT UNTOUCHED.
...ZEN.
...YOU WERE DIFFERENT...
YOU WERE REBORN AS A COMPLETELY NEW PERSON.
...AND WEREN'T BOUND BY THE PAST OR BY SOCIETY.
YOU LOST YOUR MEMORY ...

AND IT TURNED OUT...



...YOU EVEN BROKE THE CURSE OF FATE.

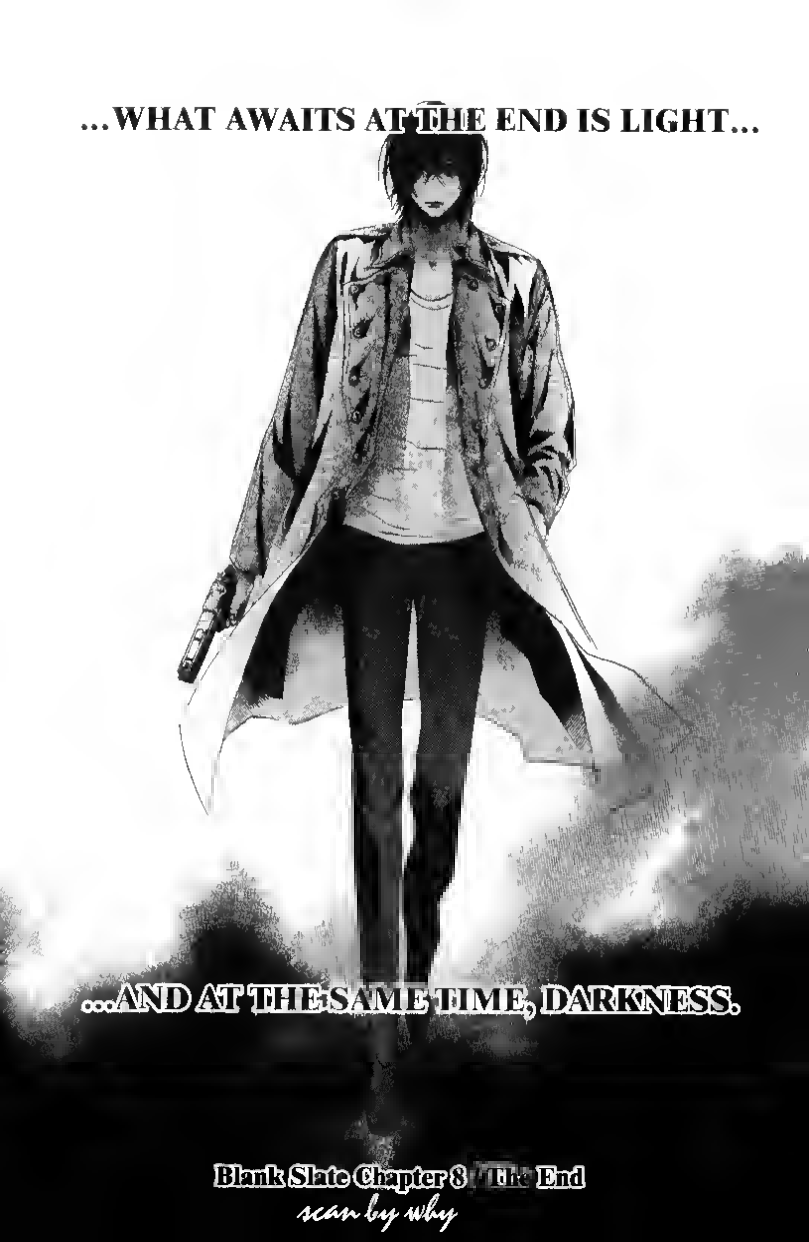
BOOM
ZERO...
WILL YOU...
JOIN ME?

I DON'T FOLLOW ANYONE.
I TAKE THE ROAD I CHOOSE.
...I'LL CRUSH IT TO HELL.
IF THE GOVERNMENT GETS IN MY WAY...
...ZERO ANY LONGER.
YOU'RE NOT...
I SEE.

ALL LIVING THINGS ARE EVIL IN SOME WAY.

DOWN THE LONG PATH OF DESTRUCTION, OF DEATH...

...WHAT AWAITS AT THE END IS LIGHT...



...AND AT THE SAME TIME, DARKNESS.

scan by why